United Nations A/70/PV.85

General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

85th plenary meeting
Friday, 12 February 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft ..... (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Gumende (Mozambique), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 16 and 117 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674)

The Acting President: We will now continue to hear statements on the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674).

Ms. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We strongly support the collective efforts of the United Nations in its fight against terrorism. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) is a milestone in the international confrontation with that scourge and appropriately gives the General Assembly the central role in such efforts. Any effort undertaken in that area must be supported by the pillars of the Strategy. We take note of the Secretary-General's initiative set forth in document A/70/674 and his commitment to developing a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Cuba is a country that, in the process of defending its independence and dignity, has for decades suffered the consequences of criminal terrorist acts organized, financed and executed from outside its territory. The human toll as a result of such acts amounts to 3,478 dead and 2,099 disabled. We reiterate our steadfast determination to fight terrorism and our deepest rejection and condemnation of all terrorist acts, methods and practices in all their forms and manifestations by whomever, against whomever and wherever they may occur, whatever their motivations might be, including those in which States are directly or indirectly involved.

The international community should not accept that, under the pretext of an alleged fight against terrorism, certain States commit acts of aggression, interfere in the internal affairs of other States, or commit or allow gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including torture, kidnapping, illegal detentions, disappearances and extrajudicial executions. Double standards are unacceptable, nor are unilateral actions, which are contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and the principles and norms of international law.

The violation of those legal and ethical principles fertilizes the soil for terrorism and undermines the legitimacy of our fight against that phenomenon. Respect for international law, the freedom of persons and the self-determination of peoples, the promotion of social justice, equity and inclusion, and solidarity among peoples and at the international level aimed at realizing the right to development are essential objectives and humanist culture values that we defend. Excessive wealth and selfishness, injustice and intolerance, domination and unilateralism promote terror and violence.

The Secretary-General's Plan of Action is consistent and dovetails with the forthcoming review of the

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United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It is a contribution to that process, but it should not replace the Strategy. It is clear that any decision on such a vital issue can be achieved only through consensus among the States Members of the United Nations.

Terrorism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It undermines international peace and security, human rights and sustainable development, as is stated in the introduction to the Plan of Action. No country or region is immune to its effects, nor should the phenomenon be associated with any specific religion, race or an ethnic group. In order to eliminate it, we must address the causes and conditions that generate it: poverty, inequality, underdevelopment, exclusion, injustice, military interventions, foreign occupation and interference with the intention to dominate others, discrimination, inter alia, are all drivers of violent extremism. The efforts of the international community should include actions to overcome their root causes.

Our country has worked steadily to develop policies designed to prevent conditions for the emergence of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. An example is the fact that in Cuba there is absolute respect for all religious beliefs, which may be practiced without hindrance. There is also a comprehensive scheme of social protection, high levels of education, health care and social security. Young people play an important role in society, and there is strong and effective legislation for the fight against terrorism.

The international community requires more dialogue and understanding among cultures and civilizations. That must be provided in order to deal with the increase in attacks and kidnappings and the use of modern information and communications technologies in activities related to and in promotion of terrorism. Those new technologies represent a challenge to the exercise of self-determination of peoples, owing to their manipulation as weapons for political regime change, masked in interventionist projects that follow flexible scripts contained in the strategy of so-called soft coups. In those soft coups, the recourse to terrorist acts is preserved if such acts are deemed essential to meeting the objective of overthrowing the legitimate authorities of the country in question.

It is worth reiterating the complaint against and the condemnation of the actions of a few powerful States that design, finance and implement actions contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, making use of the Internet and such traditional media as radio and television. Such actions, which may even take the form of acts of cyberwar, most commonly appear in projects aimed at undermining the constitutional order of sovereign States and at spreading messages of intolerance, hate and lies against other peoples, cultures, political systems or history.

The elimination of terrorism requires all States without exception to comply with their international obligations, including the prosecution or extradition of the perpetrators of such crimes. No State genuinely committed to the fight against terrorism can be allowed to provide a safe haven for terrorists. There exists no argument that could legitimize such actions.

We reiterate our unwavering will and commitment in the fight against the scourge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and our constant readiness to cooperate with all Member States guided by the goal of achieving a concerted response to terrorism. We reaffirm the central role of the General Assembly in the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Ms. Argüello González (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): For the delegation of Nicaragua, today's agenda item represents a theme of vital importance, and we shall give a brief summary of certain points that are crucial to us with regard to the issue of violent extremism.

We take note of the Secretary-General's initiative, contained in document A/70/674 and of his efforts to develop a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

In 2013, the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed resolution 68/127, which Nicaragua co-sponsored and which had the support of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The resolution, entitled "A world against violence and violent extremism", addresses the challenge faced by the international community, given that such threats are without borders and that it is only by pulling together that we can combat them. We reiterate the overriding need to discuss the issue of violent extremism among Member States and to find solutions together. Perhaps the best time to do so would be when we meet to discuss the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June.

The Nicaraguan delegation rejects and condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations by whomsoever, against whomsoever and wherever committed, regardless of motivation, including acts in which States are directly or indirectly involved. For our country, it is of vital importance to respect international law and the right of peoples to self-determination and an inclusive social development that truly takes into account the right to development.

Global capitalism promotes terror and violence. We must tackle its root causes, fighting for a fair society where no one feels excluded. Violent extremism is not exclusive to any region, nationality or system of beliefs. It is, therefore, a threat against which we must all fight. Nicaragua reaffirms that the situation will worsen if we do not act together to try to address the causes of such anxiety, brutality and catastrophe.

In the words of our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra:

> "Our Organization should promote respect, peace, sovereign security, justice and solidarity among human beings. The Organization must respond in the face of that barbaric intervention in and interruption of the tranquillity and the right to prosperity in the lives of millions of families of countries and entire populations." (*A/70/PV.23, p. 11*)

Ms. Grignon (Kenya): My delegation wishes to thank the President for organizing this timely debate and for his continued engagement on the issue of how best to take forward the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), including through resolution 70/254, which the Assembly adopted on Friday.

We also thank the Secretary-General for presenting to the Assembly the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. As he noted during his presentation, the Plan of Action is an urgent call for unity and action against violent extremism and terrorism. Indeed, the theme of the general debate at the Assembly's seventieth session was "A new commitment to action", with a focus on sustainable development, peace and security, human rights and good governance.

Allow me to reaffirm Kenya's commitment to multilateralism and a rule-based international system. I assure the President of our delegation's continued support for efforts to strengthen the United Nations and to enable it to meet contemporary and future challenges, while maintaining its character as a universal body for our common good. The General Assembly is the only forum with the legitimacy and universality to address violent extremism in all its complexity. It needs to take a greater leadership role in response to that threat.

The Kenyan delegation welcomes the Plan of Action as complementary to existing national strategies and plans on violent extremism. We shall utilize it as a guide to strengthen our national plans and strategies and also to on draw lessons learned from it to help us to improve our responses to violent extremism. Similarly, the recommendations in the Plan of Action will help us to enhance the coordination of programmes and other activities aimed at preventing violent extremism nationally, regionally and globally.

Although the United Nations cannot provide a one-size-fits-all solution to the task of preventing violent extremism, it provides the best forum for unifying efforts. It is by focusing more on what unites us all collectively and less on what divides us, in terms of global action against violent extremism, that we will be able to achieve more than the sum total of our individual efforts. That calls for genuine efforts to share information, ideas and experiences on best and proven practices. To succeed, we must send a clear signal that we are united against violent extremism and that we are determined to overcome our differences.

We need to address all the factors that make our youth, both rich and poor, so vulnerable to violent extremist ideology. The Plan of Action lays a solid basis for addressing those factors, and Member States should endeavour to incorporate its recommendations at the national and regional levels, while considering our unique socioeconomic, cultural and political circumstances.

I wish to reaffirm Kenya's commitment to implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, especially the current efforts to review the Strategy and align it with the changing realities on the ground. We are also committed to other international obligations, including the various Security Council resolutions relating to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. In that regard, I cite Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014) and 2253 (2015). We shall continue to partner with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the Counter-Terrorism

Committee Executive Directorate in order to bolster our capabilities and implement commitments on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Kenya fully supports all efforts aimed at preventing violent extremism and looks forward to engaging further during the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr. Minami (Japan): At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to the President for convening today's debate.

Today, we face the threat of terrorism, especially from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or Da'esh. Despite various measures taken by international society, terrorists continue to thrive and commit murder, torture and sexual violence and, of course, create humanitarian crises. It is deplorable that around 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters from more than 100 Member States have been attracted to ISIL and associated groups and actively engage with them. Now is the prime time to combat the root cause of terrorism, namely, violent extremism.

In addition to the conventional countermeasures, we must address violent extremism conducive to terrorism. This timely Plan of Action, which is a landmark document, is gaining momentum. Japan strongly supports resolution 70/254 and the Plan of Action. We believe the resolutionwill be an important demonstration of our solid determination.

Years ago, Japan established a national action plan to make our society safe. We have taken law enforcement measures as well as preventative measures, such as community policing, the protection of women and children and the rehabilitation of prisoners. Outside Japan, we have been supporting various regions to help create societies resilient to radicalization through vocational training, school construction and assistance with the reintegration of ex-soldiers.

ISIL is spreading its ideology globally by taking advantage of conflict areas and vulnerable countries. Moreover, ISIL is not alone in propagating the ideology of violent extremism aimed at inspiring and recruiting a number of young people. We must ourselves increase our efforts to prevent violent extremism in each of our societies and then support those who do not have the capacity to do so themselves. We must remove loopholes. The United Nations plays a critical role in supporting Member States in need. I urge United Nations entities to coordinate with each other so as to avoid duplication, and to act collectively. I urge Member States to unite to fight terrorism and prevent violent extremism. I look forward to discussing concrete actions based on resolution 70/254 and the Plan of Action.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): At the outset, I thank the President of the General Assembly and his team for convening this timely meeting and for conducting our business in a transparent and inclusive manner.

As terrorism and violent extremism are on the rise globally, the efforts by the international community should be redoubled to prevent and counter such scourges in an effective manner. The United Nations has a considerable role to play in changing the environment conducive to intolerance, racial discrimination, xenophobia, violent extremism and terrorism around the world.

We join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his efforts in preparing the comprehensive Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. His report (A/70/674) is under consideration in Armenia. The report clearly applies a multidisciplinary approach and methodology in addressing the various drivers of violent extremism and in offering a set of preventive tools at the national, regional and international levels.

The Plan of Action draws a distinct link between conflict prevention and resolution on the one hand, and the prevention of violent extremism, on the other. In that respect, we would like to highlight the importance of regional mechanisms for conflict mediation and resolution, as well as the need to prevent terrorism and violent extremism by reducing the appeal of, and support for, violent extremist groups and ideologies. Such an approach is duly elaborated in the document. Further strengthening early warning and detection mechanisms and enhancing the prevention toolbox at all levels are also crucial to that end. We note with satisfaction the provisions referring to the establishment of early warning centres and the prohibition of incitement to hatred.

Prevention should be the primary action aimed at halting deteriorating situations and their progression into crisis. Armenia has been a continuous supporter of and contributor to the elaboration of preventive mechanisms at the national and international levels. In particular, the resolutions on the prevention of genocide, which have been consistently initiated by Armenia in the

Human Rights Council since 2005, attach prominence to the critical functions of early warning and early action. Early signs of a spread of violent extremism should remain a focus for collective efforts and actions. Armenia consistently supports the efforts of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide to elaborate the concept of prevention, as well as practical tools for the early detection of deteriorating situations.

The drivers of radicalization — the "pull" and "push" factors, as identified in the report — are detectable at early stages. Continued and systematic violations of human rights, marginalization, discrimination, poor governance and the denial of opportunities are precursors for massive crimes, for which violent extremism is the conduit and instrument. The need for a comprehensive approach to preventing radicalization, violent extremism and atrocities is compelling. We note that such an approach is duly reflected in the Plan of Action.

The present report and the Plan of Action serve as an important contribution to continued, consolidated and determined international efforts to combat violent extremism. Indeed, Member States should further the understanding of the phenomenon and the implementation of individual and collective measures against it. We note that the report recognizes the diverse nature of the phenomenon, which still requires a clear definition. Finally, the efforts of the international community, in denying fertile ground for violent extremism, should join the broader vision for change, which is evolving towards a solid, shared responsibility for humanity. The Secretary-General makes a strong appeal to send forth a resounding call for peace, justice and human dignity. Armenia looks forward to further consideration of the Plan of Action at the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review in June 2016 and in other relevant forums.

Mr. Mashkoor (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to align itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

My country would like to extend its thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his great efforts in preparing the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

Violent extremism is a grave challenge that has the attention of Member States, in particular Iraq. We believe that the Plan will be useful if all Member States are committed to it, in line with their international obligations under Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the fight against violent extremism. Violent extremism has given rise to international terrorism, which is spreading across our societies. Terrorists come from more than 100 Member States of the United Nations, committing the most egregious forms of killing, which run counter to the fundamental principles of humanity, coexistence, tolerance and respect for diversity. That is why it is necessary to combat terrorism and to support international efforts to counter it and curb its dangers and threats.

Violent extremist ideologies are a direct threat to international peace and security, undermining social coexistence and cohesion as well as stability in our societies. We should therefore adopt an informed approach to combating those challenges, one based on a clear strategy and explicit and declared positions. In that regard, my country notes that the adoption of educational curricula that accuse people of apostasy or infidelity and that promote erroneous Takfiri fatwas through the social media has led to extremist ideological aberrations that use terrorism — in all its forms and manifestations — as a tool to impose erroneous ideologies, threatening international peace and security, as well as human civilization. It is necessary to reform educational curricula in certain countries and adopt appropriate mechanisms to prevent the use of the Internet and audiovisual media in the promotion of extremism and recruitment of terrorists.

Countering those challenges and the threat of violent extremism requires a commitment to tolerance, reconciliation and respect for cultural and religious diversity and for the freedom of thought and expression. Dialogue among religious leaders is an important tool in efforts to strengthen peaceful coexistence within and among societies and respect for religious and ideological diversity, as well as our common humanity.

To decisively counter the perpetrators and drivers of violence and extremism, it is necessary to dry up the resources of terrorism, as stipulated in Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015). It is also important to promote the concepts of good governance, the rule of law and human rights; to create job opportunities for young people and women;

to implement development programmes; and to provide basic services.

There is also a need to ensure accountability and punishment for perpetrators of violations of human rights laws. In that regard, the Iraqi Government, in accordance with our programme, is deepening the concept of citizenship. We are seeking to ensure political, economic and legislative reform and to build national cohesion by unifying the efforts of all components of Iraqi society. Therefore, today we bear witness to a general national consensus on our national principles.

Terrorist organizations, such as Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front, Boko Haram and Al-Qaida are committing the most heinous forms of killing and destruction in the name of Islam, a religion that has nothing to do with such acts. It is, therefore, the responsibility of Governments and religious leaders to combat extremist and Takfiri ideology, and the misleading fatwas of jihad. Religious discourse should also combat exclusionist views and their supporters by promoting the true teachings of our venerable religion and by exposing the baselessness of the slogans of such violent extremist ideology.

In conclusion, my country would like to endorse the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674) and the whole-of-United-Nations approach. In that connection, we welcome the elements of resolution 70/254. We will work closely with Member States and with the United Nations to implement the Plan of Action, because Iraq is one of the countries most affected by the phenomenon of violent terrorism and international terrorism, one of the tools of violent extremism.

Mr. Anshor (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting to discuss the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, as recommended by the Secretary-General (A/70/674).

I wish to align my statement with the statement delivered by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

Indonesia remains concerned about the surge of violent extremism that is conducive to terrorism. It is a threat to our security and well-being and to the values of humankind. Accordingly, Indonesia appreciates the Secretary-General's initiative to present the Plan of Action for consideration by Member States.

In our view, the Plan of Action will enrich our discussion at relevant United Nations forums on countering terrorism and violent extremism. The Plan of Action may also help us to enhance our national strategies aimed at addressing violent extremism and exploring preventive measures, and to improve programmes to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We note that the Plan of Action includes various relevant ideas, best practices and lessons learned put forward by many stakeholders. Some of the recommendations in the Plan of Action have, actually, already been put into operation by States, including Indonesia.

It is critical to have a comprehensive understanding of the nature of violent extremism, including the conditions that breed it. Indonesia takes note that the Plan of Action was developed based on the premise that violent extremism does not arise in a vacuum. Its root causes are complex, and a multidisciplinary approach is needed to prevent it. Yet, there are challenges to our efforts to build such a comprehensive understanding.

First, there are gaps separating some of the key pertinent values that exist in our different communities and a lack of efforts to address those gaps. That challenge is particularly evident in certain manifestations of the exercise of fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression. There are cases when the exercise of freedom of expression is considered legitimate by some communities but at the same time is seen as an affront by other communities with different values or beliefs. That challenge will become more complex if the practice of double standards in deciding the limits of freedom of expression continues. The lack of respect for different values will only create different and mutually exclusive narratives in dealing with common problems and thereby prevent Member States from arriving at a common resolve.

Secondly, there is persistent stigmatization against certain groups of people. Stigmatization creates mutual suspicion in communities. That is certainly counterproductive to efforts to build cohesive communities, which are indispensable for preventing violent extremism.

Indonesia believes that it is important to overcome those two challenges in our efforts to arrive at a common understanding. Without that common understanding, we will not be able to build a common platform to respond to violent extremism, let alone strengthen cooperation

to prevent it. More dangerously, the inability, or even unwillingness, to overcome those two challenges will widen the distrust that continues to exist among States. Clearly, such a condition is not conducive to success in our fight against violent extremism.

Indonesia will give further consideration to the practical recommendations contained in the Plan of Action, with a view to improving our national strategies against extremism and radicalization. From our own experiences, measures that emphasize the engagement of key stakeholders, such as families, schools and religious institutions, have a great chance of success in preventing violent extremism. Such measures must certainly be followed by policies that enhance the cohesiveness and inclusiveness of society. It is along those lines that Indonesia created its counter-radicalization and deradicalization programme. The programme emphasizes dialogue between moderate religious leaders and convicted terrorists serving their time in prisons and economically empowers deradicalized persons with a view to equipping them to reintegrate into society.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the urgency of finding political solutions to prolonged and unresolved conflicts, as well as to foreign occupation and subjugation. Areas with protracted conflicts have been used by extremists as safe havens, while foreign occupation and subjugation have been exploited by extremists to propagate their views, even to people who live far away from conflict areas. Those facts alone should remind all States to re-energize collective efforts in this matter.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to extend my thanks to the President for convening this important meeting. My delegation takes notes of the report of the Secretary-General and the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

Once again, we reaffirm the support of the Syrian Arab Republic for all serious and sincere efforts to address the threat posed by terrorism and its toxic ideology and to uphold the values of tolerance, dialogue and respect for religions and civilizations — values for which Syria has been known over the years. We are trying our best to preserve those values.

The first step to success in combating terrorism and grappling with the phenomenon of violent extremism and its consequences, such as the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, lies in the strict adherence to Security Council and other United Nations counter-terrorism resolutions and related instruments, in particular resolutions 1624 (2005), 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015) and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Governments that violate such instruments and provide various forms of support to terrorism must be held accountable.

Indeed, any effort to prevent violent extremism requires adherence to international law and the Charter of the United Nations in order to address its root causes. We need not reinvent the wheel or start again from scratch. Our work must be based on the instruments that we have adopted in recent years within the framework of various agenda items, such as countering terrorism, the culture of peace, dialogue among civilizations and combating intolerance, discrimination, incitement and violence. In that manner we can benefit from our cumulative work and experience.

In that regard, I would like to stress that if the United Nations is to achieve concrete results, it must reject double standards in countering terrorism. The Organization should not ignore the behaviour of Governments that support terrorism, prolong crises and impede their settlement, incite violence and terrorism, and spread hate speech, intolerance and discrimination based on various factors. Such well-known Governments claim that they seek to combat the violent extremism that they actually support and propagate. They proclaim their resolve to combat the very terrorism that they have created and sponsored.

My delegation would like to stress that efforts to prevent violent extremism will not succeed unless the international community ends the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and other occupied Arab territories in Palestine and Lebanon and the violent extremism and terrorism perpetrated by Israeli settlers against Arab citizens living under occupation. Violent Israeli extremism has been backed by extreme Israeli Governments that have refused and rejected resolutions of international legitimacy and sought to create a one-religion State in the occupied territories that excludes the followers of other faiths.

It is also essential to end the injustices caused by violations of international law and the United Nations Charter through illegitimate foreign military interventions, unilateral coercive measures and discrimination, all of which the United Nations

maintains are invalid. Such harmful behaviour includes discrimination based on religion, colour, race or nationality, the distortion and defamation of religions, the use of hate speech and incitement and stereotyping in political and partisan campaigns.

With regard to the points contained in the Secretary-General's report and the Plan of Action, my delegation would like to raise the following points.

First, what are the criteria that will enable the legislative parties to decide whether or not extremism by an individual is violent? Who will make that decision? How can we standardize the norms in different cultures and civilizations? At what point does extremism become violent? Such questions remain unanswered.

Second, if, according to the Secretary-General's report, Da'esh represents violent extremism, how can foreign terrorist fighters join such a violently extremist organization without the organization itself being described as such? The situation has become so unrealistic and so ludicrous that today some States refer to those fighters — mercenary foreign terrorist fighters brought into Syria and Iraq, but particularly to Syria, from all over the world — as the moderate Syrian opposition. That is the ludicrous landscape that we are facing today.

Third, the Secretary-General's report indicates that violent extremists have been able to recruit over 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters from more than 100 States Members of the United Nations to go to Syria and Iraq. Given our strong reservations with regard to that number — because the actual figure is much higher — the question is: did those violent extremists or terrorists succeed on their own? Did States send all of those foreign terrorist fighters? Did fighters manage to recruit additional terrorist fighters all on their own? What of the Governments supporting terrorism that have facilitated, armed and funded those terrorists? Some of them are Governments of Member States well known to the Assembly. One of them has been entrusted with sponsoring the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre; a national of another holds the post of United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, and in a few months, a third will host the World Humanitarian Summit.

Fourth, the report states that Da'esh and other extremist groups have benefited from the armed conflict in Syria and the instability in Iraq and Libya. Yet the report deliberately ignores the fact that the main reason for the emergence of Da'esh, which was spawned by Al-Qaida in Iraq, is the illegitimate military interventions in Member States, persecution, oppression and human rights violations and the destruction and looting of the capabilities of those countries and peoples. Like other reports issued by the Secretariat, the report under consideration also deliberately disregards the terrorist entity referred to as the Al-Nusrah Front in an attempt to legitimize that entity and treat it as Syrian moderate armed opposition.

Fifth, in his Plan of Action, the Secretary-General repeatedly uses the term "rule of law" in an exaggerated manner, with a view to creating the impression that the term is one of the pillars of the work of the United Nations enshrined in the Charter. The Secretariat is well aware of the fact that there is, to date, no agreed definition for that term, and Member States differ considerably on its implementation at the national and international levels. What we are trying to say is that the Secretariat should wait until there is consensus among the Member States on that term before promoting it and issuing it in a report of the Secretary-General.

Sixth, the Secretary-General's Plan of Action refers to his intention to strengthen such efforts in line with his initiative entitled Human Rights Up Front, which was prepared by the Secretary-General alone and has not been considered officially or sufficiently and has not yet been adopted by Member States.

Seventh, the Secretary-General refers to his intention to include the prevention of violent extremism in the framework of the activities of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Such a proposal raises legal concerns related to the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the fact that most peacekeepers often do not know the traditions and beliefs and cultures of the host communities and are not able to judge what is violent extremism and what is non-violent extremism in those communities.

Eighth, the Secretary-General reaffirms the importance of engaging the concerned parties and of their participation and of a plurality of views, while at the same time that he excludes interested countries from consultations and ignores observations and information addressed to him by certain Member States, including by us in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Ninth, for decades my country has taken measures to prevent extremism and terrorism. The Plan of Action includes important and constructive recommendations

and proposals, but we fear that other States will not remain committed to it after its adoption, as has been the case with Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism, which are openly violated by the Governments of some Member States without any concerns about accountability. How can repressive regimes that resemble those of the Middle Ages, that marginalize women, who make up half of the society, and that spread Wahhabi extremist ideas and sponsor terrorist organizations — such as Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Khorasan Group and the Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar and others — accept a Plan that calls for strengthening the role and status of women and the values of tolerance, respect for religions and human rights?

Tenth, with regard to funding the Plan of Action, my delegation underscores the fundamental legal principle that the responsibility for reparations lies with the perpetrator. Hence, the United Nations and its principle organ, the Security Council, should place the responsibility on the Member States supporting terrorism and oblige them to repatriate their fighters and shoulder the main cost of combating terrorism and violent extremism which leads to terrorism.

In conclusion, my delegation calls on the Secretariat to address our concerns and the rightful concerns raised by other delegations with regard to the Plan of Action. My delegation welcomes that discussion.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka): My delegation welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and his proposed Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) with its focus on seven priority areas.

As a country that suffered under the oppressive yoke of violent extremism and terrorism for nearly three decades, until 2009, Sri Lanka understands the challenges and encourages genuine efforts to strengthen the United Nations system and its role and effectiveness in addressing that issue.

Sri Lanka wholeheartedly condemns violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and recognizes the need to acknowledge the link between violent extremism and terrorism, which is a scourge not exclusive to any one country or region and which is spreading across national borders. That rising transnational phenomenon challenges existing borders and threatens the very fabric of sovereign States upon which the international legal order is based.

We continue to be deeply concerned over the acute and growing threat of foreign terrorist fighters. With tens of thousands of such fighters hailing from over 100 States, it is imperative to harness the global support and respond more aggressively to those threats. The phenomenon has assumed serious proportions, given the widespread death and destruction caused by organizations such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other groups. We also have to look at new and innovative ways to counter that growing threat. For instance, it is well known today that there are more than 50,000 Twitter accounts supporting ISIL, with an average of 1,000 followers each. We therefore welcome all Security Council resolutions on foreign terrorist fighters, including resolution 2178 (2014), condemning violent extremism and underscoring the need to prevent travel of and support for foreign terrorist fighters.

International networks with linkages to organized crime are a critical lifeline for violent extremism and terrorists groups. They are not phenomena that a single State or a few States can deal with; rather the problem demands a concerted global effort. It is therefore imperative for all Member States to pool their resources and share intelligence to counter that threat.

Today, particularly in the Middle East and in East and West Africa, as indeed in many other parts of the world, violent extremism targets vulnerable and marginalized communities, children, minorities, women and girls. It is therefore imperative that we proactively include and engage those entities of the United Nations system that deal with children, minorities, women and girls.

As comprehensively listed in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, the areas of human development, the empowerment of women and youth and the strengthening of good governance, human rights and the rule of law are of critical importance in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism. The eradication of poverty, in concert with increased social and economic opportunities, is essential to efforts to counter human frustration and the threat of radicalization.

We need to sharpen and strengthen inter-agency coordination methods and avoid practices that sometimes substitute process for outcome. Sri Lanka therefore not only welcomes the necessary paradigm shift from countering violent extremism to preventing violent extremism, but also the all-of-the-United Nations approach envisaged in the Plan of Action.

We agree with the Secretary-General that the United Nations, as the foremost multilateral body, must act to prevent the further spread of violent extremism. In doing so, we need to adopt a comprehensive approach that encompasses not only ongoing essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventive measures that directly address the drivers of violent extremism at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Indeed, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) in order to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism. It is vital, therefore, that all Member States agree on a common strategic approach to fight violent extremism and terrorism. That will not only send a clear message that such phenomena are unacceptable in all their forms and manifestations, but it will also allow States to take practical steps, both individually and collectively, to prevent and combat such phenomena. As noble as those objectives are, we must also avoid lapsing into bureaucratic routine. States must demonstrate the requisite political will and commitment to close ranks and make a determined and singular effort to overcome that challenge.

We must recognize that the building blocks for enhancing international cooperation in those areas are contained in the efforts undertaken by the General Assembly, in particular the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism, which has already resulted in 14 sectoral conventions on the suppression of terrorism. I must mention in that context that, despite the support of many Member States and despite having been mandated by the General Assembly to come up with a comprehensive legal framework to fill possible gaps in the existing sectoral conventions on terrorism, there has, unfortunately, been a failure to muster the necessary political will to break the current impasse surrounding the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

It is pertinent at this time to recall that the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism was one of the key components of the plan of action to combat terrorism annexed to resolution 60/288, of September 2006. It is unfortunate that it remains unimplemented. The time has come, therefore, to move that negotiating process to a conclusion.

The role of the General Assembly over the years in standard-setting has contributed markedly to the progressive development of international law and its codification. However, it is now time to act as one body. Our efforts must not be based on business as usual. Given the threats that we face today, there is no time more urgent than the present to make this happen. We already have the building blocks needed to formulate a comprehensive response to those threats.

It is my delegation's sincere hope that we can reject silos and work together as one body to come up with a comprehensive plan of action to counter violent extremism and terrorism. My delegation is therefore pleased to welcome resolution 70/254, adopted by consensus today, aimed at further consideration of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action at the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review to be held in June this year.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting and the Secretary-General for his efforts in preparing the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We welcome the adoption of resolution 70/254, presented by the President, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

We would like to add our voice to the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation this morning (see A/70/PV.84).

The dangers emanating from violent extremism and the direct threat that it poses to international peace and security and to sustainable development mean that combatting extremism will not be achieved without an international cooperation plan that takes into consideration the raison d'être and the motives behind extremism. Violent extremism has shown by its actions that it prospers in environments in which there is impunity and the rule of law is lacking. Violent extremism is therefore seen in societies in which policies of exclusion, social marginalization, despotism and a lack of development prevail. Long-running conflicts and systematic policies of killing and persecuting people fuel extremism.

The State of Qatar rejects all forms of extremism and any attempt to link violent extremism and terrorism to a specific region, religion or ethnicity. Attempts by some, as reflected in Islamophobia, to link individual acts of violence to specific religions without evidence

to support such a linkage are misleading and undermine efforts to understand the reasons behind terrorism. Desecrating religious symbols give extremists pretexts to recruit supporters.

Politicians, religious leaders, civil society and the mass media must play effective roles in efforts to combat terrorism. In that regard, we support international and regional efforts aimed at eliminating extremism and supporting human rights, the rule of law, the fight against terrorism and impunity, and the rights of people to freedom, dignity and self-determination. In the framework of the international effort to develop the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, we emphasize the need for the Plan of Action to engage a spirit of tolerance at the national, regional and international levels.

We have been trying to put an end to violent extremismthrough the establishment of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, which seeks to support and strengthen dialogue among representatives of different religions, and through the establishment of the Hamad Bin Khalifa Civilisation Center in Copenhagen, which strengthens peaceful cooperation and coexistence among religions.

The Plan of Action should also pay special attention to children and young people. Disregarding that sector and not providing a healthy environment in which to harness the potential of young people will make them vulnerable to be used as tools by terrorists. In that connection, Qatar is cooperating with a number of States on highlighting the issue of children and young people affected by violent terrorism and crime, and we are trying to rehabilitate and integrate them into society. To that end, the Silatech Institute in Qatar is raising awareness of youth unemployment in the Arab region and seeks to create employment opportunities for young people. We are trying to establish a partnership between Silatech and the relevant United Nations organs concerned with combating terrorism.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize our cooperation with other actors in countering violent extremism. We are committed to tackling that challenge at the national and international levels and to participating in international efforts to combat extremism and terrorism in all their forms.

Mr. Bonser (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada welcomes and strongly supports the initiative of the Secretary-General in connection with today's agenda item. The United Nations is uniquely placed to bring coherence and coordination to international efforts to address violent extremism. The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) recognizes that addressing violent extremism is complex and requires a comprehensive response, which must go well beyond traditional security thinking by engaging social institutions and various policy areas.

Addressing the conditions conducive to violent extremism through proactive investments and prevention efforts is essential. Canada's counter-terrorism strategy recognizes that fact, and one of its pillars seeks to address the factors that may motivate individuals to engage in terrorist activities by seeking to prevent radicalization to violence and reduce the threat and likelihood of costly intervention at a later stage. We welcome greater international focus in this area.

(*spoke in English*)

The Plan of Action's comprehensive approach makes the important linkage between deficits in governance and human rights, on the one hand, and factors that can motivate radicalization to violence, on the other. Inclusive and accountable governance fosters peaceful pluralism and diversity. Safeguarding human rights, promoting tolerance and pluralism, and reducing inequality must, therefore, be at the forefront of our efforts to prevent violent extremism.

Canada fully supports all seven priority areas identified in the Plan of Action. In addition to the focus on good governance and human rights, we share the view that promoting education, empowering youth and incorporating our young people into the solution are essential to efforts to prevent violent extremism. Other areas of engagement can also usefully inform our efforts, such as conflict-sensitive international development. Canada is actively engaged in building a comprehensive approach to addressing the drivers of violence and in maintaining the goal of inclusive development for all, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16.

As the Plan of Action correctly recognizes, to be effective, action to address violent extremism must be taken by Member States at the national and local levels. Active community engagement through dialogue is essential. In Canada, authorities at all levels are already engaged in those areas. Canada also recognizes that prevention efforts require input from non-governmental actors, civil society and community organizations, as is outlined in the Plan of Action. The most effective

approach to preventing radicalization to violence is not from the top down; rather, it begins in communities and involves working with local leaders to develop early intervention programmes.

We support the call for the development of national action plans. Canada is already engaged in a process that seeks to bring together our efforts in that area. Our Government has committed to creating an office dedicated to community outreach and counter-radicalization in order to provide national leadership on that important issue. And we are developing a national strategy on countering radicalization to violence.

As called for in the Plan of Action, Canada will continue to support regional bodies and Member States in developing their capacities to address the drivers of violent extremism. Canadian capacity-building efforts seek to bolster community resilience against radicalization to violence, to strengthen and amplify voices seeking to counter extremist narratives and to build national responses aimed at reintegrating foreign terrorist fighters.

Canada fully supports the all-of-the-United-Nations approach outlined in the Plan of Action. Ensuring coherence throughout the United Nations will be crucial for the effective implementation of the Plan of Action. Moreover, in order to avoid the duplication of efforts, United Nations actions in this field must be closely coordinated with ongoing work in other forums. For instance, the Global Counterterrorism Forum has done valuable work in community engagement and community policing.

(*spoke in French*)

We look forward to working together with the Secretariat and the international community to explore the best ways to ensure the Plan of Action's effective implementation. That will require the development of provisions for accountability and review. We would welcome a more detailed examination of the specifics of the Plan of Action's implementation, including ideas for priority-setting and accountability, in the appropriate contexts. In that connection, Canada looks forward to the upcoming conference on the Plan of Action in Geneva.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): As we speak today, violent extremism and its more sinister handmaiden, terrorism, in various parts of the world are destroying the very values that we as modern societies hold dear: the values of human dignity, peace and security. It is escalating an already unprecedented humanitarian crisis, as millions of people are being forced from their homes. The new manifestations of terrorism pose a greater threat than ever to our international security, peace and humanity. Efforts to implement concrete actions to prevent and counter terrorism are urgent and imperative.

Today's debate is indeed very timely, and my delegation expresses its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report, entitled "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism" (A/70/674). Maldives vehemently condemns all acts, methods and practices of violent extremism and terrorism in all their forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and on whatever grounds. The Maldives believes that streamlined counter-radicalization efforts must be amplified so as to ensure a lasting victory against violent extremism. Recent events related to Da'esh or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram and other extremist factions speak to us of the immediate need to redouble our efforts at the national, regional and international levels in order to unite and harmonize our actions undertaken to counter terrorism and violent extremism.

We are increasingly reminded that the phenomenon of terrorism is not just one country's problem or just a regional problem. Terrorism knows no borders; it is pervasive and global. The problem must, therefore, be tackled as such through a unified global strategy. In order to address the interlinked and evolving nature of terrorism, we need to build strong partnerships to counter the shared threats to our security. The Government of Maldives has joined other States in a coalition to build partnerships to resolve those interlinked threats. We are also working with our international partners to enhance efforts to combat terrorism. The Government of Maldives remains committed to working with our regional and international partners through increased cooperation and international solidarity with a view to suppressing those threats.

We will not win this fight by military might alone. Winning the war on values, progress and ideology remains a big challenge. We need to allow our societies to empower people's minds and open their hearts to respect one another. We need to protect our children, enlighten them through education and empower our youth. Only then will we be able to cultivate a culture of respect that could enable the forging of a joint vision of tolerance and the rejection of terrorism. Countering

terrorism is a battle that we can win only if we fight it with our minds.

As Governments, we have the responsibility to connect with our youth and present them with appropriate alternatives. In that regard, the Maldives reiterates that it recognizes youth as an asset of society. In our view, empowering youth and providing a platform for them to express their views is imperative. As a major policy priority, the Government is addressing the needs of the large youth population of our country to provide them with opportunities to realize their true potential.

We must further harness the tools we have and strengthen legal frameworks in order, in particular, to detect and disrupt the stream of foreign terrorist fighters and any terrorist-related travel. Since the adoption of the landmark Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), the Government of Maldives has embarked on a number of concrete actions to curb the stream of foreign terrorist fighters and to ensure the safety and security of all Maldivians.

Consistent with the spirit of resolution 2178 (2014), in 2015, the Maldives enacted a new anti-terrorism act, under which it is a serious criminal offence for any Maldivian to travel to fight in terrorist wars on foreign soil. The Government remains vigilant in monitoring suspected acts of terror so as to prevent terrorism and tackle conditions conducive to terrorism. Furthermore, the Maldives has also enacted the Prevention of Money-Laundering and Terrorism-Financing Act, which criminalizes money-laundering and terrorist financing in the Maldives. Both of those key acts provide a robust framework that focuses on preventive measures to address violent extremism.

Islam is increasingly associated with terror and extremism. Islamophobia represents a spectrum of negative expressions and continues to rapidly expand. The Maldives, too, has not been immune to the tentacles of radicalized Islam. Efforts must be intensified to build bridges among our communities and promote our shared values of peace, compassion and tolerance. We should strengthen those actions that counter and eliminate false connotations regarding religions, ethnicity and culture.

The terrorism we see today in the world defies all logic. It relies on mindless and vicious violence, perpetrated most often against the weak and the marginalized, against ethnic and religious minorities, and against defenceless societies. The Maldives believes that violent extremism and terrorism should have no place in our modern societies and should not go unpunished. The perpetrators should be held accountable as soon as possible, and their victims should be protected and empowered. We believe that the best and strongest defence against terrorism is to present a unified and cohesive front against that menace, which threatens not only our coexistence, but all civilized ethics. The Maldives stands committed and ready to work with the international community in that battle.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to join others in expressing appreciation to the President for convening today's meetings to deliberate on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We thank the Secretary-General for taking this initiative at a time when the world is confronting growing threats of terrorism and violent extremism, which represent a shared challenge that requires a shared and collective response from States and the international community as a whole.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) was adopted with the view to promoting comprehensive, coordinated and consistent responses at the national, regional and international levels. A decade after its adoption, however, the question is to what extent have we been able to translate the Strategy into concrete actions? At the risk of prejudging the outcome of the review of the Strategy, we regret that its implementation has been far from effective. And yet — and this is to state the obvious — the nature of the threat we face has evolved and expanded over the past decade, underscoring the need for systematic and practical cooperation at all levels to address it.

In that regard, the Secretary-General's Plan of Action needs to be qualitatively different from the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, given that the Plan of Action is called upon to deliver concrete results, which can be achieved only if there is genuine and effective cooperation based on equal treatment. There is no rationale that justifies failure to cooperate effectively in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism; what is required is not lip service, but concrete and practical cooperation.

It is no exaggeration to state that terrorist groups and their affiliates seem to cooperate better among themselves than do Member States, even though they profess to fight terrorism. Terrorist groups

have established networks across many regions and effectively utilize the Internet and social media to spread their extremist ideology and recruit foreign fighters.

It is impossible to counter the growing threat posed by those terrorists and extremists without forging practical cooperation and strengthening coordination, including the sharing of intelligence, the enhancement of border security, the establishment of mechanisms for cooperation and the exchange of valuable experience between and among the States Members of the United Nations. Nonetheless, we have to admit that the hypocrisy and double standards manifest in our approach so far have been undermining our efforts to respond to the threat posed by terrorism in an effective, coherent and coordinated manner. Therefore, if we are to have a tangible impact on the ground, our approach has to change. The particular distinction that is made between terrorism at the local and international levels needs to be overcome.

In the regions most affected by threats of terrorism and violent extremism, it is absolutely critical that there be regional coordination to address the specific challenges that terrorist organizations pose in their respective areas of operation. I am not sure how many of our regions have effective mechanisms of that type and how much the United Nations has supported them so far. Obviously, the United Nations cannot do much to counter terrorism and violent extremism without cooperating with regional coordination mechanisms. It is therefore crucial to provide those mechanisms with the necessary support and build their capacities. We believe that the United Nations can contribute a great deal by doing so, and we are pleased to note that that fact has been recognized in the Plan of Action.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Ethiopia's commitment to enhancing effective international cooperation in combating the scourge of terrorism. In that context, we in Ethiopia have already established practical cooperation and coordination of efforts with countries in our subregion through the sharing of intelligence and the exchange of valuable experience in the fight against terrorism.

I wish to conclude my remarks by once again emphasizing the importance of practical and action-oriented cooperation and coordination of our efforts aimed at countering terrorism and violent extremism. We should do a better job than the terrorists in coordinating our actions, if we really want to achieve meaningful results.

Mrs. Quiel Murcia (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General in presenting his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Violent extremism is a scourge that respects no boundaries, no religious beliefs and no nationalities. Indeed, its negative effects on very diverse populations pose a challenge to everyone.

Today's debate could not be more relevant, as it comes at a time when humanitarian crises and forced displacements are consequences of violent extremism and terrorism that have only recently upset countries, regardless of the flags they fly, and have claimed countless human lives. Because of the number of victims and the degree of suffering, the phenomenon is generating so much concern that, setting an historic precedent, the leaders of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches will meet in our region in just a few hours from now to address this threat in the name of peace and understanding.

With a vision of global responsibility and a desire to promote peace and human rights, Panama has expressed support for the international efforts to prevent the financing of terrorism, which is seen as a threat to humankind. We therefore welcome the initiative of the Government of Switzerland to hold an international conference on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in Geneva on 7 and 8 April. In that regard, Panama welcomes the criteria in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, which recommends to States that they draw up national plans of action in certain priority areas to prevent violent extremism.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) — with which we are seeking to eliminate social inequalities in order to establish a world that is free of extreme poverty but also free of fear and violence and in which all people can develop their potential — must become a reality. Therefore the 2030 Agenda and the Plan of Action should be complementary. The promotion of peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies is an imperative. Inclusive development that promotes equality and, above all, respect for human rights, democracy, human development, gender equality and the growing participation of women and young people is a responsibility for all States. We welcome the Secretary-General's offer to make available to States

the platform of the United Nations agencies with a view to supporting national efforts for this purppose.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), which the General Assembly adopted unanimously 10 years ago, specifically addresses the issue of prevention and provides for the balanced implementation of its four pillars, which emphasize the need to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law in combating terrorism. The Plan of Action presented by the Secretary-General undoubtedly supports the implementation of the Global Strategy. My country wishes to recognize the leadership of the Organization and its commitment to the role that it must play in support of States' efforts to combat violent extremism and identify the root causes that motivate such extremism to the detriment of our societies.

Panama repudiates all acts of violence, regardless of their origin, which violate the norms of international law as the sole foundation of international peace and security. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the Plan of Action.

I conclude by reiterating the call for all nations to achieve a consensus on specific actions to counter radicalization and violent extremism, while upholding democratic values and a vision that contains the principles on which we can build peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/70/PV.84). I will make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Croatia welcomes the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) and highly commends the Secretary-General's efforts and leadership in that field. In our view, the Plan of Action represents a consistent move forward and coherently supplements earlier established processes. It is, simply put, an important step in the right direction.

Croatia has always been a supporter of the central role of the United Nations in global counter-terrorism efforts and an advocate of the multifaceted implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). We agree that, in order for the fight against terrorism to be successful, security-based counter-terrorism measures must go hand in hand with softer, preventive actions that address the drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The United Nations has a unique position in those activities, and its leading role should be further promoted, especially in assisting Member States in countering, preventing and mitigating the disturbing impacts of violent extremism on peace and security, sustainable development, the rule of law and humanitarian action.

Croatia welcomes the recommendation that Member States should consider developing national plans of action to prevent violent extremism and address the local drivers of it. Country-specific conditions and circumstances have to be taken fully into account. While we contemplate the problem from the global perspective, action is needed on the local level. The development of regional and subregional plans of action, especially in the most vulnerable regions, should be based on commonalities and possible synergies in order to better reflect region-specific conditions, while at the same time avoiding any duplications in that regard.

Although the risk of violent extremism conducive to terrorism has been low in Croatia, we are committed to investing efforts in prevention. Last year, the Croatian Government adopted a new national strategy for the prevention and suppression of terrorism, which, like the previous one, contains elements dealing with the prevention of extremism. This year, we plan to adopt a new action plan for the implementation of the national strategy, which will also incorporate the prevention of violent extremism, taking into account the recommendations set forth in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

We appreciate the fact that the Plan of Action provides the basis for the first-ever whole-of-United Nations approach to support national, regional and global efforts against violent extremism and to implement key pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It is crucial for United Nations entities to enhance their coordination in that regard, promote the most promising initiatives and adequately address rapidly evolving challenges.

Croatia also supports the interdisciplinary all-of-society approach taken by the Plan of Action, which is needed in order to build peaceful and inclusive societies. With the full engagement of all stakeholders — Governments, local communities, international organizations and agencies, civil society, religious communities, academia, the private sector, the media and, most of all, the citizens themselves — we

will achieve results in that field. We need to strive for a harmonized functioning of our communities so that we can target the underlying socioeconomic, political and ideological drivers of terrorism and violent extremism and build resilience and social cohesion.

Let us underline once more that violent extremism recognizes no borders of a moral, religious or State provenance. It must therefore not be associated with any nationality, ethnicity, race or religion. This menace poses a threat to all countries and all peoples, regardless of their background. However, in the light of the diversity of societies, terrorists and extremists tend to target social rifts in an effort to make them deeper and more divisive. We are particularly concerned at the fact that some terrorist groups, especially the Islamic State in the Levant/Da'esh, deliberately target their propaganda at Muslim communities, particularly youth. It is therefore of paramount importance to step up the fight against false interpretations and perceptions of religion, including the attempts to use any religion as a justification for violence.

In that vein, Croatia, as a predominantly Catholic country, is especially proud of the exemplary level of inclusion and integration of the Muslim community in Croatia, which is also engaged in and dedicated to fighting violent extremist narratives. We are glad to be able to commend many positive developments and examples of cooperation between the Croatian Muslim community and the State and local authorities that enhance the overall cohesion and richness of our society. It is worth mentioning that in April we will celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the official recognition of the Muslim community in Croatia.

Let me conclude by saying that we are certain and confident that the Plan of Action will help ensure a more comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We believe that we have the right tools and instruments at our disposal for concerted action to counter the scourge of violent extremism around the globe. In that vein, we again highly commend the Secretary-General's efforts, and we welcome the adoption of today's resolution 70/254.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): Bangladesh appreciates the efforts of the President to ensure today's adoption of resolution 70/254 in order to take forward the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674).

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84).

Bangladesh considers the Plan of Action to be a sound basis for our collective, integrated and strategic work on preventing violent extremism. We detect many commonalities between our national policies and actions on preventing violent extremism under the resolute guidance of our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the seven-point Plan of Action outlined by the Secretary-General. Bangladesh maintains an unequivocal zero-tolerance approach to terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms and manifestations. We believe that terrorists and violent extremists do not have any religion, creed or caste. We remain committed to ensuring that our territory is not used for terrorist activities directed at other States, including our neighbours.

Bangladesh considers that the Secretary-General's Plan of Action contains a useful portfolio of analytical tools and recommendations. It allows Member States to identify the key drivers of violent extremism in their respective contexts and thus to calibrate their appropriate responses at the national, subregional and regional levels. The Secretary-General has developed his Plan of Action in relation to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), especially its pillars I and IV.

For us, the Plan of Action aims to leverage the agenda for the prevention of violent extremism to contribute in the larger context to comprehensive, multidimensional and effective counter-terrorism strategies, and not to replace them. As we see it, the prevention of violent extremism can be pursued in the interface between security and development, while being anchored in human rights principles. The prevention of violent extremism does offer the international community an avenue to avoid the potential pitfalls of overreliance or singular reliance on a military-based approach to counter-terrorism.

Prevention is supposedly the buzzword of the United Nations peace and security agenda at the moment. There is perhaps a growing convergence on giving much-needed attention to preventing the underlying drivers of intolerance, violence, radicalization and terrorism to robustly complement the work of the Organization to end conflicts and defeat terrorism.

A consensus, however, will remain elusive as long as there is a perceived imbalance in the identification of the real drivers and processes of radicalization and violent extremism.

We see no purpose in denying some of the fundamental root causes that continue to give a steady supply and sustenance to the toxic messages being peddled by certain segments of violent extremists. The present Plan of Action refers to the potential impacts of foreign occupation, protracted conflicts and systematic human rights abuses, but it shies away from identifying certain obvious, particular cases, as it has done with many others. We can opt for partial narratives to address the malaise of radicalization and violent extremism, but that may only serve to embolden those who thrive on their own interpretation of events, no matter how misguided their logic or objectives may be.

Likewise, the Plan of Action tends to focus on the local drivers of violent extremism, but it shows rather scant understanding of the external factors that profoundly influence the local narratives. The collective grievances, ideological imports and illicit financial flows that permeate through national borders continue to fuel the vested agenda of the local actors, including violent extremists.

The role of modern technologies, particularly the Internet, merits our special attention when it comes to tackling violent extremism. It would be somewhat futile to address the spread of violent extremist messaging online only through the binaries of security versus access and privacy. We need to find a common space for different groups of actors to converge and cooperate in the face of a shared global threat. Even if it takes time, Member States should seriously consider reviewing the existing legal and normative frameworks to further facilitate mutual assistance and cooperation, with the active involvement, commitment and responsiveness of the private sector.

Bangladesh stands ready to draw on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action and to customize it in line with our national circumstances and priorities. In order to address the upstream challenges of violent extremism at the grass roots, we have recently joined the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund. As a pilot beneficiary country, our sustained investment in human development has been critical in reducing poverty, enhancing women's social mobility, creating education and employment opportunities, especially for the youth, and strengthening human rights and the rule of law. Bangladesh's impressive achievement in women's empowerment has been a critical factor in resisting extremist elements in our midst. In our aspiration to build a knowledge-based society, we have made it a mission to infuse a culture of peace in the minds of our children and youth.

Bangladesh wishes to see our deliberations concerning counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism be contextualized within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), since, apart from climate change, there is perhaps no greater threat to our collective, sustainable development pursuits than terrorism and violent extremism.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): New Zealand is pleased to join this debate today.

Violent extremist groups such as the Islamic State in the Levant and Boko Haram threaten international security, and for an increasing number of communities they also threaten all three pillars of the United Nations: peace, development and human rights. The Secretary-General is right when he says that this is an affront to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. He is also right to call on the General Assembly to speak in a united voice. We need to speak out not only against violent extremists, but also for the values of this Organization. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) is an important first step in finding this stronger, more united voice.

But most importantly, we need to act. Many of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report, such as greater community engagement, youth empowerment and measures to counter marginalization, reflect activities New Zealand already carries out and actively promotes.

We welcome the flexible approach in the Plan. It encourages States to select, from a range of recommendations, those actions that fit best in their specific context. The Plan rightly covers a broad range of activities beyond the traditional deradicalization or counter-extremism programmes. We hope this upstream approach will help us to move away from an overly security-focused approach to tackling the conditions that breed extremism. In New Zealand the most effective programmes have been those that do not solely target violent extremism but have a broader, more

positive aim, such as supporting inclusive communities and resilient individuals.

We also see important emerging issues, notably the challenges posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters and their rehabilitation. Many States are grappling with that, including New Zealand. While the returnee issue is often seen through the lens of a threat posed to Western countries, it is directly relevant to many countries around the world, including those of North Africa and the Middle East, and especially countries already in conflict. The issue of returnees warrants further exploration, and we believe the United Nations can provide an important forum for discussing best practices.

Many States require targeted support and capacity-building to implement programmes to prevent violent extremism. The challenges are greatest in countries that are already suffering from instability and conflict. We are pleased to see the Secretary-General recommending that, in line with their mandates, United Nations peace operations should integrate the prevention of violent extremism into their activities. The issue deserves immediate attention by the Security Council.

Many actors and initiatives are already working to prevent violent extremism. New Zealand is pleased to be a member of several of them, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum. When it comes to effective funding platforms, we are also pleased to be on the board of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund. The United Nations has an important role to play in that crowded space, but it needs to better leverage its comparative advantage, by which we mean better utilizing the United Nations unparalleled convening power and presence on the ground in 180 countries, as well as enhancing United Nations mechanisms for targeting capacity-building and, where necessary, employing the Security Council's ability to establish a common legal framework to support common action.

The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism is another example of the United Nations utilizing that comparative advantage. We need to ensure that the One United Nations ambition in that plan and the leadership shown by the Secretary-General are realized. Just as Member States need to focus on what actions we will take, the United Nations needs to translate its commitments into sustainable and coordinated action.

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): We wish to inform the President and to notify the interpreters that Norway will not read its full statement.

Norway welcomes and strongly supports the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Violent extremism can never be legitimized, regardless of political, ideological or religious motivations. Nor should violent extremism be associated with any particular religion, nationality or system of belief.

As the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674) highlights, in 2011 the Norwegian terrorist Breivik, inspired by right-wing extremist ideology, killed 77 people, mostly youth. It also illustrates with uncomfortable clarity that violent extremism recognizes no borders, no cultures, no religions and no ethnic groups. It is a phenomenon that affects us all, and it can only be tackled by us all. No country is immune.

The threat from groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab continues to rise as such groups commit atrocities and attack innocent people in all corners of the world. The unprecedented high number of foreign terrorist fighters travelling to areas of conflict and instability is of particular concern. Not only are they wreaking further havoc in already fragile countries and areas, but they also pose a threat upon returning to their home countries, or as they travel to other areas of instability, with the aim of radicalizing others.

The international community must adapt to the changing landscape of violent extremism. That is why the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism is timely and much needed. Furthermore, the Plan appropriately seeks to highlight and strengthen pillars I and IV of the 2006 United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) with regard to tackling conditions conducive to terrorism and ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law. I would like to highlight three areas of the Plan that Norway finds to be of particular importance.

First, national action plans on preventing violent extremism are important tools for setting priorities to comprehensively and effectively tackle local drivers of violent extremism. Norway adopted its first plan of action to prevent violent extremism in 2010. It has since been revised, and the current plan is a dynamic document that is updated regularly to respond to the rapidly changing landscape of threat, including the

issue of returning foreign terrorist fighters. The plan of action takes a whole-of-government approach, with nine different ministries involved. That broad approach has provided the plan with legitimacy and credibility, and it has ensured its effectiveness.

Secondly, the Plan of Action seeks to empower important groups such as communities, cities, civil society, youth and women. Although Governments have the primary responsibility for preventing violent extremism, they need to work closely with other groups, including civil society.

At the Conference on Countering Violent Extremism held in Oslo in June of last year, Norway initiated the launch of two civil society networks. The first is YouthCAN — a network of youth working against violent extremism, including by producing counter and alternative narratives. The second is the alliance of women's organizations working against violent extremism, which Norway supports.

The third area I would to highlight is that national action plans must recognize the importance of dialogue, conflict prevention, good governance, the rule of law and human rights. That is particularly important in areas of conflict and instability. Poverty is not the sole cause of violent extremism. Nevertheless, marginalization, whether economic, social or political, is often an important element in the process of radicalization that results in violent extremism. We need a comprehensive approach to address the conditions conducive to violent extremism. We must address both the "push" and "p-ull" factors.

The Secretary-General's Plan of Action is a call to action. We as Member States have the primary responsibility for implementing the Plan. We must form new partnerships with civil society, youth and women. But we also need a strong United Nations to show global leadership. We need a United Nations that is fit for purpose and has sufficient resources to do its part. The review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy later this year will provide us with a unique opportunity to discuss national and regional implementation of the Strategy and the Plan of Action. It will also provide an opportunity to ensure that the United Nations is adequately equipped to provide the requisite strong, cohesive and high-level leadership to effectively coordinate its efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism.

Mr. Mahmadaminov (Tajikistan): Terrorism is a complex social and political phenomenon, multifaceted and diverse in its manifestations. The increasing scope of international terrorism, especially in such forms as acts of terror, religious extremism, nationalistic terrorism, poses a real threat to society, not only to individual countries but to the entire world community.

Sad events such as the recent attacks in Paris and Bamako, as well as other acts of terrorism, have been occurring with tragic regularity in certain countries, including in the city of Kunduz in Afghanistan. The terrorist attacks in Ankara and Beirut, explosions in mosques in Yemen and Pakistan, the explosion of the Russian aircraft over the Sinai peninsula and many other tragic events force us to unite our efforts in the face of a common threat, that is, international terrorism.

Today more than ever before, the international community needs to work closely together to develop constructive approaches to address these issues in order to prevent such acts of barbarism in our homes. We all know that currently international terrorist organizations in the Middle East and North Africa have been gradually building up their capacity, consistently strengthening ties with radical organizations that operate in the territory of member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Terrorism and extremism have become serious global threats that cause destruction, killings and the mass exodus of people. All such occurrences and events offer vivid proof of the fact that the number of this century's challenges and new threats to human civilization are constantly increasing, posing serious danger to the security of both small and large countries throughout the world, and even to the destiny of all humankind.

Such events have once again proved that on the one hand, terrorism and extremism are serious global threats, aptly called a plague of the century. On the other hand, their impact shows that terrorism does not respect borders and does not have a motherland, nationality or religion, and that poses a threat to the global community and the lives of all residents of the planet. This outrageous phenomenon has nothing to do with a religion, particularly with the true religion of Islam. Acts of terror are committed by the enemies of that holy religion, usually affecting Islamic countries and the entire Muslim world.

Therefore, Tajikistan categorically and resolutely condemns international terrorism, which constitutes a key challenge to global security, in all its forms and manifestations. We support the consolidation of the efforts of the international community in this area at the global, regional and national levels. Tajikistan supports the Security Council's relevant resolutions as a legal basis for international cooperation in countering terrorism.

It is action at the local, national and regional levels that will have the most impact when combating terrorism and extremism. The Government of Tajikistan, taking into consideration the seriousness of terrorist threats to the security and stability of the country and to its social and economic development, has taken decisive and comprehensive measures to prevent and combat terrorism and to eradicate the factors that give rise to terrorism and contribute to its spread. The relevant law enforcement and public agencies of Tajikistan have been tasked with developing a national strategy for Tajikistan on countering terrorism and extremism for the period from 2016 to 2020. Furthermore, they are working on a proposal to establish a centre for fighting information technology crimes and cyberterrorism.

We strongly believe that the central role in this struggle should belong to the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is a unique tool for the intensification of efforts to combat terrorism at the national, regional and international levels. Efforts should be focused on eliminating the military infrastructure of international terrorism and blocking its channels of political, military and financial support, as well as on preventing the use of the Internet for the radicalization of ideas and for recruitment and propaganda for extremism and violence. Expanding the cooperation between the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), concerning counter-terrorism, and regional organizations on this issue will be also instrumental and timely in this process.

Given those considerations, my delegation finds the report of the Secretary-General on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) — which calls for concerted efforts to counter violent extremism, broader responses, early engagement and action to address the drivers of violent extremism — to be a very useful guidance tool for Member States to work on further addressing such negative phenomena as terrorism and extremism. We refer in particular to the report's recommendations that call upon Member States to develop national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism, mobilize resources, strengthen trust between Government institutions and communities, call for dialogue, engage with communities, empower youth and women, develop skills and employment facilities, and invest in education.

As a country that has experienced acts of terror on its own territory at first hand, Tajikistan would like to emphasize its willingness to engage with the international community in the fight against this phenomenon, and invites all stakeholders to work together in order to develop constructive approaches to tackling this problem.

Mr. Nkoloi (Botswana): I thank you, Sir, for convening this important debate on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. We commend the President for continuing to engage us in finding ways to tackle this global scourge.

This debate is taking place at a critical time when the international community is under siege by organized terrorist groups that commit the most heinous crimes with impunity. Violent extremism is real. It is here. In our schools and neighbourhoods, in cities, oceans and skies, the story is the same. We are under siege.

Botswana strongly condemns acts of terrorism in all their shapes and forms, and we wish to reiterate our unwavering support for efforts by the international community to safeguard international peace and security. Over the years we have been following with horror and disbelief the emergence of violent extremism and extremist groups, as well as foreign terrorist fighters, in all corners of the world. We all know they have no regard for human life. It is also clear and certain that no nation can single-handedly fight or root out organized terror. We therefore need a comprehensive global approach; that is the only way to tackle this problem.

There is no doubt that the existence of groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and many others poses a blatant challenge to international peace and security. During the past year alone, for instance, those savage groups have committed atrocious acts against humankind, ranging from bombing neighbourhoods and schools, beheading innocent civilians and carrying out inhuman and degrading torture against innocent people.

In that connection, we wish to thank the Secretary-General for his proposed Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), which is the basis for our discussions today. We also duly take note of the recommendations contained therein.

We welcome the Plan of Action and believe that it serves as a starting point on which we can further discuss how best to implement its elements. We believe that the promotion and protection of human rights should be the starting point for countering terrorism and violent extremism. Needless to say, despite its mandated responsibilities, the burden of responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security does not lie solely with the United Nations, but also with States and citizens We therefore call on the international community to scale up efforts aimed at cooperation and assistance to strengthen institutions that promote good governance and the rule of law at the regional and international levels. That can go a long way in eliminating the breeding grounds for terrorism.

Acts of terrorism taking place throughout the world are a clear demonstration that violent extremism in all its forms and shapes has no respect for national boundaries and sovereignty.

Mr. Yaremenko (Ukraine): Let me start by thanking you, Sir, for having convened this meeting to discuss the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). Ukraine also welcomes the adoption of resolution 70/254, which endorses this timely initiative.

The year 2015 was marked by a number of important events that placed the issue of the prevention of violent extremism high on the global agenda. It started with the White House summit to counter violent extremism, hosted by United States President Barack Obama, which was followed by a number of regional conferences, and the leaders summit on countering the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and violent extremism, held on the margins of the seventieth session of the General Assembly. We would like to extend our gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his personal commitment to this goal and for his Plan of Action, which has capped all those endeavours. It is a highly anticipated initiative, aimed at elaborating a comprehensive approach with long-term actions to address violent extremism and its root causes.

Both violent extremism and its gravest form, terrorism, threaten our core values and principles, including human rights, the rule of law, democracy, equal opportunity and freedom. Moreover, the negative impact of violent extremist ideology, propagated throughout the world by terrorist entities such as the Islamic State in the Levant and its affiliates, raises our concern. It goes without saying that fighting violent extremism only through military means does not have a long-lasting effect. Eliminating its manifestations in one region but failing to remove the root causes that maintain it will merely entail its outbreak somewhere else in the world.

Only combining more nuanced and comprehensive measures to counter and prevent terrorism — measures that address governance deficit and promote social development and dialogue, respect for the rule of law and human rights, strategic communications, the engagement of women and youth, investment in human capital and job creation, education, public-private partnerships — will help us to reduce the appeal of and support for extremist groups, while enhancing resilience against them. Those elements are included into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and reflected in the recently adopted Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security, as well as in other relevant United Nations instruments.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General that, in a long-term perspective,

> "the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralist societies, based on the full respect of human rights and with economic opportunities for all represents the most tangible and meaningful alternative to violent extremism and the most promising strategy for rendering it unattractive." (*A/70/674, para. 7*)

With that in mind, Ukraine has recently adopted its national human rights strategy and implementation plan, which, with existing legislative measures, are aimed at building a harmonious society and preventing radicalization. Certainly, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for achieving that goal. But in our view, our collective response to this threat should be focused on addressing the underlying factors that provide opportunities for violent extremism to flourish, such as corruption and poor governance, marginalization and discrimination that may cause mass grievances, human rights violations and prolonged and unresolved conflicts. With regard to the latter, we resolutely

condemn any acts of external meddling aimed at escalating motiveless tensions within a society, leading to an outbreak of conflict, and, at the same time, any type of incitement, including, inter alia, by providing support to and financing violent extremists.

Ukraine, like no other country, takes seriously the threat posed by violent extremism and terrorism, being a target of the aggression of the Russian Federation, which started in February 2014 with the occupation of Crimea and continued with military operations in the Donbas region of Ukraine. The terrorist component in the undeclared war against Ukraine is clearly visible and has become an important phenomenon in the everyday life of the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. The Russian-backed terrorist seizure of control of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in April and May 2014 was followed by the massive violation of human rights, including taking hostages, torture, the disappearance and killing of loyal Ukrainian citizens and the expropriation of State and private property, including administrative premises and business and trade locations.

It is obvious that without the significant financial, material and military assistance from the aggressor State, the territories not under the control of the Government would not even be capable of surviving. Therefore, despite all international efforts, the Russian Federation continues to export terrorism to Ukraine by supplying weapons, including heavy arms, to the illegal armed groups, and training their members and organizing the recruitment of former Russian military and law-enforcement servicemen. They are transferred to the eastern region of Ukraine in order to strengthen the combat capabilities of local terrorists.

We took note of a number of credible recommendations in the Plan of Action relating to the efforts of the Member States in preventing violent extremism. However, there is less reflection on how the United Nations might more effectively mainstream our joint efforts through its instruments that can allow more long-term and sustainable engagement at the national level. Therefore, we expect the active engagement of all the relevant United Nations actors in this process, in terms of providing us with full support from the United Nations side in comprehensive guidance and technical support programmes.

Ukraine supports the call for further consideration of the Plan of Action, both during the review process of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June and in other relevant international forums. We commend the initiative of the Government of Switzerland to host an international conference on the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in Geneva on 7 and 8 April 2016. We look forward to extensive expert and high-level discussions on exploring the possibilities for the United Nations and its Member States to redouble their joint efforts in responding to the evolving threats of violent extremism.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela thanks the President for convening this plenary meeting of the General Assembly to discuss a subject to which my country attaches particular importance, and for his good offices in facilitating the submission of the recently adopted consensus resolution 70/254.

The world has seen with astonishment how recourse to violence and terrorism to subjugate various societies, civilizations, religions and beliefs has taken on innovative forms, although deep down they are still the result of practices rooted in intolerance, sectarianism and violent extremism. Terrorism and violent extremism are now problems with a global reach that blatantly threaten international peace and security. Among other things, proof of that includes today's unprecedented threat posed by the self-styled Islamic State, into which at least 34 terrorist organizations from different regions of the world — not just the Middle East and North Africa — have been incorporated, beside the fact that more than 30,000 people, including women and children, from at least 100 countries all around the world have such terrorist groups.

That is why it is important for the international community to act collectively and decisively to prevent, combat and effectively eliminate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including violent extremism. That should be a straightforward struggle in which the provisions set out in international instruments and the relevant resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council must be complied with fully, not in a selective manner — particularly those prohibiting the transfer of weapons, financing, training and the provision of safe harbour to terrorist groups.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has taken due note of the recommendations contained in the proposed Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent

Extremism (A/70/674), which we are considering today. We are particularly pleased that this initiative is framed both within the item on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the agenda item entitled "Culture of peace". We believe that the Organization should use this preventive approach with greater regularity in its efforts to contribute to the fight against violent extremism when it leads to terrorism, whenever it threatens international peace and security and has clear detrimental effect on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In that regard, we particularly welcome the fact that the proposed Secretary-General's Plan of Action includes two aspects that are fundamental for my country, namely, addressing the causes that lead to violent extremism, and the need to achieve political solutions to protracted conflicts. Similarly, we share the call of the Secretary-General for the development of national plans of action, following a multidimensional approach and with the participation of all State institutions, because we recognize that there is no single solution to those problems; each case has its peculiarities and is unlike any other.

Experience teaches us that terrorist groups thrive on despair, injustice, frustration, the lack of opportunities and the denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms to promote their criminal agenda — in some cases a political agenda — based on hatred, intolerance, sectarianism and violent extremism. We therefore believe that the international response requires addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in the world so as to develop effective and innovative strategies to counter extremist and terrorist narratives and foster critical thinking in our societies in order to prevent radicalization, recruitment and mobilization of both human and economic resources.

Moreover, we believe that the long-term solution to the threats posed by violent extremism today necessarily involves the political settlement of conflicts in countries such as Syria, Libya, Iraq and Palestine. Those protracted crises further exacerbate conflicts and serve as a breeding ground for violent extremism. They encourage transnational organized crime and facilitate the flow, financing and training of foreign terrorist fighters, thereby enhancing the ability of terrorist organizations to act.

My country believes that the fight against terrorism and violent extremism must take place in the framework of international cooperation, in accordance with existing international and regional instruments in this sphere, including the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law, in full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Otherwise, it would be radicalization that would be promoted.

Although we are very grateful to the Secretary-General for his initiative — which we are sure has the laudable goal of strengthening the support of the United Nations system for Member States in dealing with, inter alia, the underlying causes of violent extremism — my delegation has certain observations to make on the course of action to address the considerations and recommendations set out in his proposed Plan of Action.

Venezuela is of the view that the consideration of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented to us today should be take place in separate discussion tracks among States Members of the Organization, with the purpose of debating the recommendations made therein in the framework of intergovernmental negotiations and adoption by this multilateral forum, if so decided.

The presentation of the Plan of Action is quite timely, considering that during the month of June the General Assembly will review the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. That is why we believe that that will be the most relevant occasion to take up the recommendations of the Secretary-General and harmonize them with the Strategy, in the interest of avoiding duplication of effort and the adoption of parallel initiatives. In that connection, we believe that the draft Secretary-General's Plan of Action includes valuable elements that form part of several of the central pillars of the Strategy and that could in fact complement it.

Finally, we believe that the international community must continue to work on the development, implementation and strengthening of strategies adapted to each case, in order to neutralize terrorist groups' ability to act and the narratives inciting violent extremism. In that regard, we believe that the adoption of a future international convention against terrorism would complement the set of existing international legal instruments in facilitating a definition, including of violent extremism, that would strengthen consensus on the subject.

Mr. Tin (Myanmar): My delegation wishes to thank the President for organizing today's formal debate on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We also thank the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly for their earlier engagement with the Member States on how to move forward with this important Plan of Action.

The emergence of violent extremist terrorist groups is posing a most serious threat to international peace and security. We are all appalled at the atrocities committed by violent extremist groups that inflict suffering on innocent civilians in many parts of the world. No country is immune from the threat of the spread of violent extremism and terrorism. Terrorist attacks can happen anywhere and at any time. My delegation therefore fully shares the growing concern about this serious challenge to humankind.

We also fully recognize the urgent need for the international community to undertake joint efforts to address this, the greatest challenge of our time, and to act to prevent the further spread of violent extremism that leads to terrorism. Countering violence with violent means usually breeds further violence rather than bringing about the desired peaceful solution. The better way to counter terrorism is to forge international partnerships and take a comprehensive approach to crafting counter-terrorism measures.

At the same time, my delegation shares the view that sovereign Member States have the primary responsibility for, and an essential role in, drawing up their own national plans to address the challenges posed by violent extremist terrorism and to prevent the spread of violent extremist groups. My delegation therefore wishes to stress the importance of respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, national sovereignty and national ownership in developing national action plans in line with States' own national efforts, priorities and prevailing particularities of their countries and regions.

The United Nations system can best help Member States by providing technical assistance and support for national capacity-building in the fight against extremist terrorism in the areas and priorities requested by Member States. The United Nations also plays an important role in the collective efforts to address violent extremism in the framework of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We therefore welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard.

Decisions to forge international partnerships for taking action at the national, regional and global levels must be taken with the consent of all the Member States concerned. Accordingly, my delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 70/254 by consensus this morning.

Mrs. Natividad (Philippines): The Philippines would like to thank the President for convening today's debate, which will allow Member States to exchange views on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674). We also extend our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his hard work in coming up with the Plan of Action. The Philippines fully supports the approaches he has identified, including preventive, all-of-society and United Nations system-wide approaches. In that regard, the Philippines welcomes the adoption of resolution 70/254, on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, and supports the call regarding the need to address the drivers of violent extremism, which if not addressed will undermine our efforts to promote peace and security, human rights and sustainable development.

Addressing the scourge of violent extremism calls for urgent and comprehensive action by all sectors of the international community. The Philippines has developed a national action plan on countering violent extremism and is taking steps to curb the possible effects of the influence of radicalization and violent extremism, especially through social media. Furthermore, the Philippines intends to undertake research and policy studies on drivers, causes and catalysers of violent extremism with a view to recommending policies, strategic measures, legal actions and legislative proposals to strengthen Government efforts to counter the spread of the scourge.

As part of the whole-of-nation approach, measures will be developed in favour of community development and security and encouraging local initiatives to promote peace and the socioeconomic development of communities most vulnerable to violent extremism. Our Government has already undertaken efforts in the area of inmate rehabilitation and welfare development for those detained or serving prison sentences for crimes related to violent extremism. The Philippine national consultative process on countering violent extremism was initiated in July 2015, with the objective of engaging

various stakeholders and eventually empowering strategic sectors of society, such as women and youth, in order to counter the narrative of the Islamic State.

The Philippines continues to develop its capacity to detect and prevent insider threats from home-grown violent extremists. It supports grass-roots-based efforts to help communities understand and protect themselves against extremist and/or terrorist narratives and/or propaganda. Programmes to strengthen deradicalization are being implemented through partnerships with local religious leaders and religious schools, the principal objective of which is to improve their capacity, with the assistance of a number of international partners, to promote moderate or tolerant religious teachings.

Efforts are also being made towards international cooperation. The Philippines has been collaborating with country partners and international organizations to help to build the capacity of the Philippine Government's front-line agencies and offices for an integrated and synchronized approach against terrorism and extremism.

At the regional level, as current Chair of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Counter-Terrorism Working Group, the Philippines was able to promote discussions on the issue of countering violent extremism and foreign terrorist fighters, two important themes that have been identified as priorities for my country. There is now a move for greater collaboration among APEC member States in countering foreign terrorist fighters and promoting exchange of information regarding actions and movements of terrorist and extremist organizations and individuals.

The Philippines believes that the measures we are undertaking can further be complemented by support and assistance from the United Nations and its relevant agencies. In that regard, we find the Secretary-General's recommendations on the role of the United Nations very useful. We stand ready to work with the world body and our regional and international partners in refining and strengthening our national efforts to counter violent extremism, and we look forward to further discussions on how to implement the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

Mr. Arrocha Olabuenaga (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting and thanks the Secretary-General for the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), in which he presents to Member States his recommendations for addressing the very diverse causes of violent extremism leading to terrorism at the national, regional and global levels.

Mexico recognizes that this new phenomenon for discussion on the international agenda — violent extremism — presents us with important challenges and the need to respond with a preventive and cross-cutting approach. That means that our efforts should principally encompass ensuring better conditions for development and for the rebuilding of the social fabric in order to eradicate the causes of violent extremism. A fundamental part of that task is promoting education that encourages tolerance and respect for human rights, equality between men and women, and youth empowerment — all aspects that are at the centre of the Secretary-General's report. To put it very simply, we must create conditions that can guarantee everyone a prosperous life and a dignified future.

To achieve that, it is also essential to accept certain premises. The first is that violent extremism cannot and should not be associated with any specific religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. Secondly, the goal should be to strengthen development, the rule of law and the human rights regime, without which it will be impossible to mitigate many of the root causes of violent extremism. Thirdly, measures to prevent it should be implemented without discrimination or stereotyping. Fourthly, in confronting this phenomenon, all States have an obligation to act strictly in accordance with international law, particularly international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law.

In that way we will avoid measures to combat violent extremism that produce another sort of reaction in society that could stigmatize various sectors or population groups or encourage the very radicalization that they seek to prevent. We emphasize the responsibility that political, religious and community leaders bear for ensuring that the messages they send promote tolerance, respect and a culture of peace, and shun xenophobic and discriminatory propaganda, including in the context of political campaigns and elections.

I take the opportunity of today's debate to sound some notes of caution about potential unintended effects of the Plan of Action, which my delegation believes should be taken into account and discussed as openly as possible. Although the Secretary-General's proposed Plan of Action addresses violent extremism only insofar

as it leads to terrorism, the lack of a definition of both concepts that is acceptable to the entire international community, together with a multiplicity of examples that could fall into either category, should compel us to deepen our analysis of the range that the issue might encompas in the future, especially when considering actions or measures designed to deal with any act that could be considered violent extremism.

It is therefore essential to maintain a cross-cutting approach within the United Nations system with regard to actions to prevent violent extremism, as well as to promptly follow up, and reflect on, the potential implications of inserting a notion of violent extremism that has not been agreed on into the institutional and strategic architecture for combating terrorism. This is not just an issue of promoting innovative concepts with differentiated thresholds of gravity and areas of application; it is also about including a preventive Plan of Action in the framework of a chiefly executive strategy. And if, on the contrary, what we are looking for is launching a new strategy against violent extremism, it will then be extremely important that we discuss and carefully define its scope.

My delegation reiterates its commitment to working actively with the rest of the membership in discussing this issue so that we can resolve some of the issues that have been raised in today's debate.

Mr. Estreme (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine delegation would like to reiterate its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as it is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, as well as to human dignity, peaceful coexistence, the consolidation of democracy and the economic and social development of nations.

Terrorism must be fought in the framework of the rule of law and respect for due process. It is essential that the measures that States take to combat it fully respect international law, especially international human rights law and humanitarian and refugee law. Such measures must also respect the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, such as States' sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence and the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs. We firmly believe that responses to terrorist acts cannot and should not be exclusively military but should be based on a comprehensive approach, as reflected in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. National, regional and international efforts in the area must be based on a balanced implementation of the Strategy's four pillars.

We should conduct a thorough analysis of the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, including prolonged unresolved conflicts, the absence of the rule of law, violations of human rights, discrimination for ethnic, national or religious reasons, political exclusion, economic and social marginalization and a lack of good governance. In that framework, we support resolution 70/254, adopted today, which takes note of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and encourages Member States to consider the Plan's recommendations and address the issue further in the context of the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy scheduled for June. That should be done in the light of the preventive nature of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, which attempts to set out a comprehensive framework for addressing the underlying issues that drive people to join violent extremist groups and with full respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law.

We should be provided as soon as possible with information that is as precise as possible on the potential budgetary impact of the Plan of Action, with a detailed proposal enabling us to assess the kinds of the Organization's resources that would be assigned to it. We should also get more information and clarification on some terminology questions, such as the definition of violent extremism and the scope of the Secretary-General's proposal in particular. In Argentina's view, it is important that references to violent extremism be limited to what might be conducive to terrorism or terrorist acts, since we are dealing with a concept whose broad scope could cover issues that pose no threat to international peace and security.

Finally, we reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in the fight against terrorism as a pillar of the multilateral system and an Organization with universal membership and primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We firmly believe that multilateral action through the United Nations and in accordance with its principles will enable us to tackle the threat of terrorism in full respect for international law and international human rights and humanitarian law, and to achieve a world that is safer for everyone.

Mr. Ben Sliman (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the President for organizing this debate on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Tunisia aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84). I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

My country is pleased to participate in this important debate, which affords us an opportunity to reaffirm our support for the Secretary-General's Plan of Action and to echo his urgent call to unity and action against violent extremism and its horrors and consequences in view of the global threat it poses to international peace and security.

The recent terrorist attacks in Tunis, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Burkina Faso, Turkey, Indonesia, Paris and Lebanon and elsewhere around the world, and the attacks often committed in Syria, Iraq and Libya, with their horrific massacres of civilians, illustrate the extent of the danger of violent extremism, which affects every region in the world, and the urgent need to elaborate our actions. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action calls for a common and coordinated approach by Member States at the local, national, regional and international levels to address the causes of violent extremism in all their complexity.

We believe that the choice of 2016 has symbolic importance, insofar as it coincides with the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Undoubtedly, this four-pillar Strategy is more relevant than ever. However, it should be noted that in the past greater emphasis was placed on pillar II, particularly on security measures, which are still necessary but insufficient, while pillars I and IV of the Strategy — addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism and ensuring respect for human rights for all and the rule of law within the context of the fight against terrorism — have often been neglected.

The upcoming review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in June 2016, constitutes, in our view, a genuine opportunity to take advantage of lessons of the past and to strengthen our actions by including not only security measures — which are still crucial — but also systematic prevention measures that address the causes of violent extremism.It is also undeniable that we must incorporate those actions over the long term and arm ourselves with patience, solidarity, perseverance and tenacity in order to achieve the expected results.

In that context, we are pleased that the General Assembly will work, in accordance with resolution 70/254, adopted today, to engage in substantive discussions on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action with a view to reaching a consensus on how to move forward on such an important priority. In our view, we should seize the opportunity of these discussions to consider together how to mobilize more substantial resources for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Plan of Action.

Thanks to the commitment of all stakeholders in the dialogue and the active participation of civil society, Tunisia has been able to overcome the difficulties of the transition to democracy, in particular through the adoption of a new Constitution and the holding of free and transparent legislative and presidential elections in 2014. That approach earned it the Nobel Peace Prize for 2015. As important and honourable as that is, that progress cannot conceal the challenges we face, especially that of the fight against terrorism. Tunisia is working at the national level to respond effectively and comprehensively to the terrorism it faces, given the instability of the geopolitical situation in the region. We are determined to combat this phenomenon by the force of law, and also to address the underlying causes of this global threat so as to eradicate it by preventing the radicalization of our youth.

It is in that context that in July 2015 my country adopted a new law that criminalizes acts of support, incitement, training, recruitment, praise, and attempts and complicity in attempts, as well as travel to the conflict zones, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2178 (2014).

We have also recently developed, in close collaboration with Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, a holistic and multisectoral national strategy to fight terrorism and violent extremism. The strategy is based on four axes: prevention, protection, monitoring and response. In the area of prevention, the strategy seeks to hinder attempts to directly or indirectly recruit young people, in particular via the Internet, to counter the fundamentalist doctrines of terrorist groups and to thereby reduce the sway of those doctrines on the vulnerable groups or factions of our society. The

strategy also calls for the consolidation of pedagogical approaches, the promotion of a culture of dialogue, peace and tolerance, the prevention of radicalization in prisons, the development of marginalized areas, and the rejection of any justifications for terrorist acts. It also suggests that studies on the role of women in the fight against terrorism be encouraged.

Promoting good governance, the rule of law and the universal values of human rights is also among the priorities of the strategy. We are convinced that the prevention of violent extremism must be combined with the promotion of human rights, and of the importance of protecting our achievements in that area. We are also determined to pursue the objectives of the strategy not only with the involvement of civil society, but also with that of key players in the fields of education, religious affairs and the Internet, because we believe the fight against terrorism is incumbent upon all of us.

I wish to conclude by underscoring my country's commitment to making an active contribution to the efforts of the Secretary-General to establish a new global partnership to prevent violent extremism, a partnership conveys our solidarity and unity in the defence of our shared values of peace, justice and human dignity, bearing in mind the crucial role of the United Nations and conforming to the Charter of the United Nations and our international obligations.

Mrs. Diagne (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like express my sincere gratitude to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for organizing this debate, which affords Member States an opportunity to express their views on the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

My delegation endorses the statement made by the representative of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/70/PV.84). I would like to make several remarks in my national capacity.

The spread of international terrorism and violent extremism has reached unprecedented proportions and remains a source of major concern for the international community. No country, no region of the world, is immune from this threat. Even in areas that are deemed stable and/or developed, suspicion, prejudice and violent nationalism emrge, providing conditions that are favourable to the spread of violent extremism.

The countries of our subregion of West Africa and the Sahel suffer assaults and frequent threats from terrorist and jihadist groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which continue to spread terror within communities through attacks, abductions and summary executions of a rare violence. The level of violence and cruelty of recent attacks across the world, with hundreds of innocent victims, reminds us of the urgent need to respond in a collective and coordinated manner to this pernicious threat to international peace and security.

My delegation welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Secretary General to that end and expressesits support for the Plan of Action that has been submitted for our consideration. That Plan places particular emphasis on the disastrous consequences of violent extremism for international peace and security, sustainable development, respect for human rights, the rule of law and on humanitarian work in conflict zones.

To be efficient, any action taken to combat terrorism and violent extremism must first tackle both structural and economic elements that, while being at their source, also promote their spread. Among them, I mention marginalization, discrimination, poor governance, the lack of socioeconomic prospects, the frequent misinterpretation and manipulation of religion and the abusive use of religious vocabulary.

Given a situation in which the international community seems to be having a difficult time finding appropriate approaches, it is absolutely necessary that it adopt a coercive, inclusive, united and long-term approach, while strengthening cooperation at the regional, subregional and international levels. It is important that Member States be in a position to adopt, in exercise of their full sovereignty, national plans of action based on local realities and better tailored to their socioeconomic and security contexts. The settlement and prevention of conflicts, dialogue, the involvement of the population through the mobilization of youth, the empowerment of women, education, the enhancement of skills and facilitating access to employment are all essential components of the prevention of violent extremism. Such actions can prevent the radicalization of young people and their recruitment as foreign terrorist fighters by extremist organizations.

The biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, planned for this coming

June, will provide an excellent opportunity to carry out an in-depth consideration of the Plan of Action with a view to arriving at the necessary consensus for its effective and universal implementation. To that end, the conference to be held in Geneva on 7 and 8 April will be another opportunity to continue our discussions.

In its efforts to implement measures aimed at eliminating international terrorism and violent extremism, Senegal has adopted an approach based on prevention, cooperation and rapid response. Similarly, my country is participating actively in cooperation with regard to international criminal justice against terrorism, monitoring land and sea borders and airports, mutual legal assistance, and money laundering and terrorist financing. That is in addition to the two laws passed in 2007 that established a stronger regime against perpetrators of terrorist acts.

National efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism deserve support. In that regard, the United Nations should continue to provide technical assistance to States requesting it, while ensuring better coordination of the activities of its entities, offices and programmes involved in the cause.

The fight against terrorism and the obscurantism underpinning it requires the promotion of tolerance and acceptance, which are possible only through dialogue among peoples, religions and cultures. Faced with different types of extremism on all sides, therefore, it would be fitting to develop an appropriate ideological response that could bring, especially to the youth targeted by recruiters, the true message of our religions, which is none other than the love of one's neighbour, the love of peace, and harmony among individuals and peoples, whatever their personal beliefs or religious affiliation.

Senegal, a secular and multiconfessional State, has made the culture of tolerance and peace and interreligious dialogue one of the founding pillars of its existence. That is why it is often referred to as a model in terms of the peaceful coexistence among the communities that comprise it. We are equally proud to be the melting pot of peaceful Islam, where different branches of that religion embody a philosophy capable of providing a solid bulwark against violent extremism and the rejection of the other.

My delegation is pleased that the General Assembly was able, through the adoption of resolution 70/254, to speak with one voice and accordingly send a strong and clear message regarding our will to carry out concrete and coordinated actions to fight violent extremism. Senegal remains committed to that path and will participate actively and constructively in the ongoing process.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.